

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HALIFA 00204 251722Z

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL HALIFAX

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2134

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

ALL CONGENS IN CANADA POUCH

UNCLAS HALIFAX 0204

E O 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: PEI ELECTION - LIBERALS WIN AGAIN IN

CLOSE RACE

REF: HALIFAX 0161 NOTAL

1. PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND PREMIER ALEX CAMPBELL LED HIS LIBERAL PARTY TO ITS FOURTH CONSECUTIVE PROVINCIAL ELECTION VICTORY APRIL 24, 1978 IN VERY CLOSE RACE. LIBERALS TOOK 17 SEATS AND PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVES (PC) 15 IN PEI S 32 SEAT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S (NDP) SIX CANDIDATES WERE ALL SOUNDLY DEFEATED, HAVING AGAIN FAILED TO ATTRACT VOTER INTEREST IN THEIR PARTY.
2. PREMIER CAMPBELL IS QUOTED IN LOCAL PRESS REPORTS AS HAVING SAID "WE'RE RIGHT BACK WHERE WE STARTED MORE THAN 12 YEARS AGO" ((REFERRING TO HIS FIRST ELECTION VICTORY IN 1966 WHEN LIBERALS ALSO TOOK 17 OUT OF 32 SEATS) AND THAT LATEST ELECTION WAS " MESSAGE" TO HIS GOVERNMENT.
3. PC LEADER ANGUS MACLEAN WAS DELIGHTED WITH HIS

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PAGE 02 HALIFA 00204 251722Z

PARTY S STRONG SHOWING. PC'S MORE THAN DOUBLED THEIR SEATS IN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, FROM SIX IN 1974 GENERAL ELECTION TO 15. MACLEAN SAID "THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IN PEI IS ON ITS WAY OUT. IT DOESN T MATTER IF IT GOES NOW OR SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE." HE CLAIMED THAT RESULTS OF ELECTION ARE STILL FAR FROM FINAL AND THAT OFFICIAL COUNT, TO BE RELEASED NEXT WEEK, COULD MAKE

DIFFERENCE IN OUTCOME. "ALSO THERE COULD BE RECOUNTS IN A NUMBER OF AREAS AFTER THAT". MACLEAN SAID THAT PC S WILL DO BETTER IN UPCOMING FEDERAL ELECTION AND "IT IS MUCH WIDER THAN THAT (PEI). IT IS A NATIONAL TREND".

4. ONLY ONE MEMBER OF CAMPBELL S CABINET, MINISTER OF TOURISM GILBERT R CLEMENTS, WAS DEFEATED IN ELECTION. PREMIER HAS NOT YET INDICATED WHETHER HE INTENDS TO MAKE OTHER CHANGES IN NEW GOVERNMENT S MINISTRIES.

5. FINAL VOTER TURNOUT FIGURES NOT YET AVAILABLE. PREDICTIONS WERE FOR CLOSE TO 90 PER CENT OF PEI S 74,000 ELIGIBLE VOTERS TO PARTICIPATE IN ELECTION.

6. COMMENT: PEI PROVINCIAL ELECTION WAS FOUGHT LARGELY ON LOCAL ISSUES AND ITS OUTCOME SHOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE INTERPRETED AS A GUIDE TO WHAT MAY HAPPEN IN UPCOMING FEDERAL OR PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS. NONE THE LESS, PC S STRONG SHOWING MUST BE SOURCE OF CONSIDERABLE ENCOURAGEMENT TO THAT PARTY. NOVA SCOTIA PC LEADER JOHN BUCHANAN IS USING PEI RESULTS TO SUPPORT HIS OPTIMISTIC PREDICTIONS FOR N S ELECTION EXPECTED TO BE CALLED THIS AUTUMN. PREMIER CAMPBELL, IN POWER FOR 12 YEARS, WILL CONTINUE TO GOVERN PEI BUT WITH UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 HALIFA 00204 251722Z

SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED MAJORITY AND AWARENESS OF HIS PARTY S FLAGGING FORTUNES. NDP HAS AGAIN FAILED TO END PEI TWO PARTY TRADITION AND CONTINUES IN PROVINCIAL POLITICAL WILDERNESS. END COMMENT.

7. DRAFTER: R S AYLING
AYLING

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